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ABSTRACT

After defining educational and cultural terms and establishing a model representing cultural reproduction, case studies illustrate how three Aboriginal communities are educating and socializing their children. Strelley, a community in Western Australia, has a history of determined independence that has resulted in a unique level of economic and social independence. Classes at the camps are based on traditional Aboriginal moiety divisions, pupils and teachers (one European and one Aboriginal per class) sit on woollen blankets in traditional Aboriginal circles, and the curriculum emphasizes traditional Aboriginal activities. At Hermannsburg, where the Aranda have substantially moved away from the mission and reestablished themselves as small, traditionally structured kinship groups, the out-stations operate as autonomous communities, dependent on social security benefits and on Hermannsburg for the provision of services. European teachers (resident at Hermannsburg) typically teach two 2-hour school sessions per day with the curriculum being very tightly structured around English and mathematics. The Aranda provide instruction in aspects of traditional culture. The Yipirinya community lives in extreme poverty around Alice Springs and co-exists with the dominant non-Aboriginal society. Teaching is done by untrained Aboriginals (who are being trained on-the-job), who teach literacy, numeracy, and cultural development. Implications of these developments are substantial and have not been given the prominence they deserve. (BRR)

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INNOVATION AND ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

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INNOVATION AND ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

I would like to begin with some brief comments on the concept of symbolic meaning as a central component of any concept of culture. Perhaps the most familiar symbolic system is language - obviously different sounds have different symbolic significance which may vary from language to language, and from situation to situation within a language. Equally obviously, this symbolic system is part of the culture of a group. However, I would like to extend this concept to refer to a far wider set of symbolic systems. For example, a clenched fist is a symbolic act which may have a variety of meanings; a threat, a Black Power salute, an obscene gesture, or a secret society greeting. The interpretation of this behaviour will depend on when it is used, who uses it, what other behaviours accompany it, and most importantly, how the observer has learned to interpret it. That is, the meaning of an act depends on the observer's interpretations.

When I am speaking of culture, then, I wish to refer to the symbolic system which incorporates the rules that govern how an individual interprets his environment (including other people, as well as the physical environment). As in language, these rules cannot be directly observed. They must be inferred from observation and from the identification of regularities. This is how linguists generate rules for language; similarly, our concern in analysing culture is a concern for identifying the "grammar" of the symbolic system being utilised. These regularities represent the working out of the symbolic system, and can be used to gain insight into how people interpret the world; their "world view", or epistemological base.

Every culture generates an epistemological base which provides a framework for the symbolic system. Examples of this base would include such things as beliefs about the nature of the world, the origin of humanity, and the nature of causal relationships between events. Spindler (1963, p.30) describes this epistemological base as a;"..shared system of beliefs about reality that reassures the individual that life is worthwhile, that he knows the truth, and that by following the truth as he knows it he will be protected by his group and by his gods". The shared symbolic belief system, then, provides a system of knowledge and belief which is socially constructed by the group. As Blum (1971) describes it; " (knowledge is the) product of the informal understandings negotiated among members of an organized intellectual collectivity. The social organization of knowledge, then, is viewed not as the product of the 'factual', 'real' character of the world, but rather as an outcome of the commonsense theorizing that occurs in the process of organizing and applying some description of the world." (p.117)

I wish to begin, then, by viewing culture as a symbolic system which incorporates the rules which govern how an individual interprets his environment. That is, culture exists within the individual and is constructed anew as each individual grows up within that culture. I wish now to consider some aspects of culture in greater depth, particularly asking how it is that the culture, the set of symbolic interpretations, is recreated in each new generation.

In describing how these various components of culture go together to

form a coherent system,it is useful to consider three aspects of culture;

1. EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASE. Here I am referring to the symbolic system through which the members of a culture interpret their world - their world view. In Aboriginal society,this includes beliefs about how the world was formed ,what causes the rain, and why boys are initiated at adolescence.

2.CULTURAL OUTCOMES. I would wish to distinguish between the epistemological base described above,and "cultural outcomes",which I use to refer to the effects of a particular culture within a specific historical and geographic location. These outcomes may be considered under three headings although these are not necessarily (or even usually)discrete categories.

(a) Instrumental outcomes. Overwhelmingly,instrumental outcomes refer to the economic functioning of the group; how food is collected,prepared,stored and shared; how tools are developed and used, how property is divided up,and so on.

(b) Normative outcomes. These refer to the effects of the cultural patterns in producing a location, an identity, for the individual within the group. In Aboriginal societies the individual's location is closely defined by the formal tribal,skin group,and totemic systems, by the clearly defined inter-personal rules and obligations linking him to every other person in the community, and by the isolation and economic inter-dependence of the small residential groups.

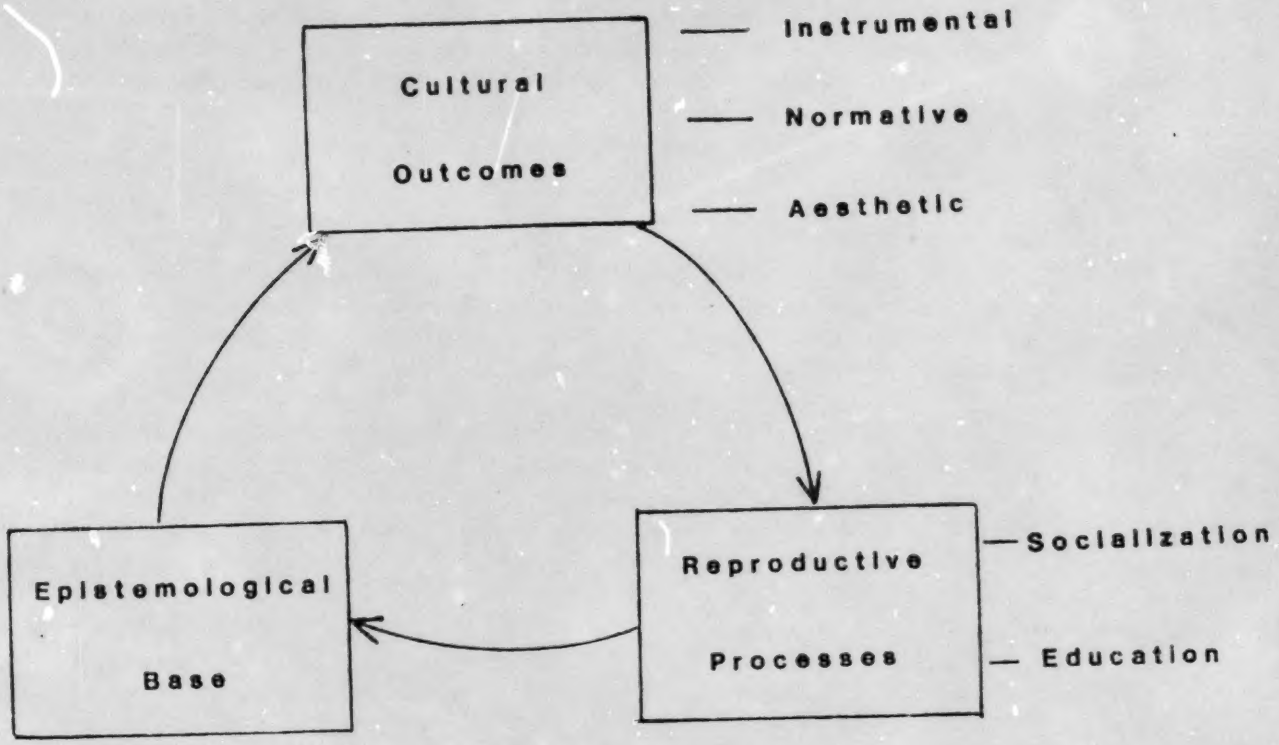
(c) Expressive outcomes. The aesthetic products of a society form the third broad category of cultural outcomes;dance,music,painting,decoration, and so on.

3.CULTURAL REPRODUCTION. I am concerned here with describing how the cultural system (both the epistemological base and outcomes) are reproduced across generations. What are the mechanisms used which result in a particular culture surviving while its individual members do not? There are two common strategies adopted here;

(a)Persuasion. The strongest mechanism for ensuring the continuation of culture is that of persuasion, and the group most vulnerable to persuasion is children. The importance of early childhood socialization has been widely recognised as a central component in cultural reproduction. The child learns,through a variety of learning situations,that one way of perceiving the world is the only acceptable way. I shall elaborate below on the two broad components of this persuasion system; education, and socialization.

(b)Coercion. However,most societies (including the Walbiri) also have access to coercive mechanisms which attempt to ensure that individuals do not deviate from the accepted view of the world held by the group.

The following diagram indicates how these components interact to form the complex whole which is culture. It is important to stress the inter-dependence of these various elements; changes in one aspect of the cultural pattern may eventually generate extensive, and often unanticipated outcomes elsewhere. This point is elaborated further below.



Coherence ⟷ Contradiction

Consensus ⟷ Conflict

Stability ⟷ Instability

This diagram suggests that cultures are closed systems which eternally reproduce themselves. However, this clearly is not the case, and in order to talk about cultural change, I wish to introduce three further concepts.

1. Coherence vs. contradiction
2. Consensus vs. conflict
3. Stability vs. instability.

I want to suggest that aspects of cultures may be characterized, to a greater or lesser degree, by these three dimensions. From within,most cultures appear to lie on the left of these dimensions; coherent,consensual and stable. However, outside observers usually find it possible to identify elements of contradiction, conflict and instability.

We are now able to combine these two sets of characteristics of culture and start asking some questions about cultural change. For example, we may wish to ask about the extent to which the epistemological base of a particular society are characterised by coherence, consensus and stability. Similarly, we may wish to ask the same questions for the outcomes and the reproduction of cultures. We could, of course, become more complicated, and examine the relationships between the epistemology and outcomes, again examining these in terms of coherence, consensus and stability. However, of particular interest to us here is the nature of education in Aboriginal society, the role played by education in cultural reproduction, and the implications for the whole cultural configuration when the educational system is deliberately modified by external agencies.

The Oxford Dictionary defines Education as "The systematic instruction,schooling or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life "(1961:Vol III, p.E44). This rather arid definition,which excludes non-vocational aspects can be compared to the kinds of definitions given by many anthropologists; "In every culture education is a form of transfer of culture from one generation to the next." (Van Baal, 1964, p.1). And again :"...the process whereby the knowledge of a people is passed from one generation to the next." (Herskovitz, 1955, p.190)

These latter definitions are also used to define such terms as socialization and acculturation, and are often used interchangeably, which can lead to some confusion. I wish to retain the idea that education is to do with the inter-generational transfer of culture (without denying the possibility of intra-generational transfer). I also wish to make a distinction between what Yehudi Cohen (1971) calls socialization and education:

"By the socialization of children I mean the activities that are devoted to the inculcation and elicitation of basic motivational and cognitive patterns through ongoing and spontaneous interaction with parents,siblings, kinsmen, and other members of the community. These activities are geared towards the creation of attitudes, values, control of impulses, cognitive orientations, and the like, in the course of daily and routine activities, both within and outside the household. Education is the inculcation of standardized and stereotyped procedures. Such procedures and content exist in all cultures, ranging from the repetitive recitation of lore, myth, and

etiquette by grandparents to grandchildren in crude shelters to the stereotyped instruction of large groups of children and adolescents (and sometimes adults) by non-kinsmen, using electronic media of communication, in elaborate and permanent buildings." (p.21)

Cohen is introducing a sense of deliberateness about education which does not apply to socialisation. Of course within any particular culture these two processes are generally in reasonable harmony, and serve to reinforce one another. That is, in the terms introduced early, the major agents of cultural reproduction (education and socialization) tend to be characterized by reasonably high levels of coherence, consensus and stability. However, it is possible for these two systems to get out of step with one another, particularly in complex, multi-cultural societies such as Australia .

In describing how this may come about, we need to elaborate on some of the differences between educational systems in different cultures. In Western cultures education has become one of the major concerns of society, engaging specialists whose one and only task is to educate the members of succeeding generations. A separate institution has been developed in which this function is carried out - the schools, which now stand for "the education system". In fact, so highly institutionalized has our education become, that the need for transmitting the culture to the younger generation is no longer reflected in the culture as a whole. The gradual concentration of responsibility for education (in Cohen's sense) in the school is related to the erosion of responsibility by other agencies, such as the family, religious institutions, etc.My concern here is to point out how this differs from Aboriginal society.

In most tribal societies no single institution meets the educational needs of the group. Consequently,all institutions in tribal societies are involved in the reproduction of the culture in the next generation. Hence, everybody is involved in educational functions (which may be largely unformulated) , as they are in socialization. Whether or not a culture has crystallized its educational efforts into a seperate institution (school) should not be taken as a criterion for the presence or absence of educatio. per. se. All cultures have a means whereby their knowledge and belief systems are transmitted to the next generation - they all prepare their young for life as they know it.

In Western-oriented multi-cultural societies schooling (as the embodiment of Education) is seen as superior to many kinds of socialization, which may even be regarded as dysfunctional for schooling, hence the effort to provide "compensatory" or "enrichment" programmes, for ethnic minorities, on the grounds that their socialization is inadequate. Also, schooling in Western societies is linear, implying progress through the grades and out of the local community - away from the confines of local socialization into a wider world. In tribal cultures, a circular model is more appropriate with socialization and education closely mirroring and reinforcing one another, and leading to very stable patterns of reproduction across generations. That is, I am suggesting that education, as one of the agencies of reproduction in Western cultures, is characterised by change rather than stability.

Clearly, in many tribal societies the distinction between socialization

and education becomes difficult to sustain. For example , socialization in Aboriginal society performed three basic tasks:

1. Introducing children into their cultural inheritance,
2. Developing their potential as individuals, and
3. Providing them with the skills necessary for their roles in society.

Within Aboriginal society it is certainly possible to identify both a formal "education" system, and an informal process of socialization. The informal system was based on the close social life of the group. Children spent their daily lives as part of the group engaged in the on-going activity of living in the Australian desert. They watched how their parents (and others) behaved, imitated them, were instructed by them, and learned from them. In this way many of the functional mores of the group, and many of the day-to-day skills were learned.

However, there was also a formal instructional system. This was most formalised in the initiation of young people into the ceremonial and mythical aspects of Aboriginal culture; the initiation process. The teaching of sacred knowledge, and of the songs and dance accompanying ceremonies, were occasions of extreme formality. The process of initiation, and the arduous hierarchical learning process which followed this initiation, were clearly distinct from the daily life of the tribe.The nature of the educational and socialization processes adopted in Aboriginal societies have been identified by a number of writers (for example Hart,1970; Harris, 1979).

Clearly, the distinction Cohen makes between socialization and education would be difficult to sustain in such a context, because they are so closely in harmony. He goes on to hypothesize that; "...the quantitative role played by socialization in the development of the individual is in direct proportion to the extent to which the network of kin relations coincides with the network of personal relations. Correlatively,education tends to increase proportionately with the degree to which the network of kin relations fails to coincide with the network of personal relations".(Cohen,1971:22).

For Aboriginal groups, to whom social relationships were inconceivable outside the kinship network,socialization was the dominating feature. For middle-class urban anglo-saxons (and their descendants in Australia and New Zealand) the networks of personal relationships may not include any kin at all (outside the immediate nuclear family) and it is here that education features predominately (particularly in its institutionalized form of schools).

We are now in a position to describe (very briefly) some aspects of the impact of western society on Aboriginal groups, and to examine the role of education in all of this. The immediate impact of the arrival of the white settlers was felt in the changed relationships Aboriginal communities were able to maintain with the land. With the expansion of the pastoral industry, the development of reserves and missions, and the alienation of Aborigines from their land, a number of major contradictions were imposed on the cultural patterns of Aboriginal groups. Immediate changes occurred in various aspects of traditional cultures - changes in instrumental outcomes (for example in economic structures, social relationships, religious practices), in reproductive systems (particularly with the introduction of western education) and changes in the epistemological base (new explanations for the world).

However, it is important to point out that these changes were rapid, were often uncontrolled, and were often mutually contradictory. The effects of these changes have been expressed in a cultural system which is fraught with contradictions and discontinuities. In the space of a few generations, Aboriginal communities have been transformed from a context in which the culture was congruent, consistent and stable, to a context in which the culture is inconsistent, contradictory, and unstable.

We also need to note that Aboriginal people have not been the passive recipients of this confusion. The history of Aboriginal responses to white society is a history of Aboriginal people struggling to reduce discontinuity, to modify their culture in order to retain coherence and an Aboriginal identity in the face of a set of external constraints, demands and impositions. As part of this struggle Aboriginal groups have been attempting to modify their epistemological base, the various manifestations of this base, and the reproductive processes which provide the central mechanisms for the recreation of Aboriginal culture in new generations. However, in all of this, the communities have been seriously hampered by (i) the arbitrary, and often contradictory demands of the powerful outside society, (ii) lack of control over many aspects of the situation (economic frameworks, land usage, legal constraints, etc.) and (iii) their lack of control over the critically important reproductive systems.

It is this third problem which has provided the basis for the development of educational programmes under Aboriginal control. A basic assumption of these programmes has been the determination of the Aboriginal groups involved to maintain the integrity of their culture within the wider context of Australian society. Education is, at least potentially, a major factor in the increase or reduction of contradiction in Aboriginal societies. The history of white attempts in Aboriginal education has been a history of adding to, not reducing, cultural dissonance and contradiction. White society has directly intervened in the reproductive processes, with a number of damaging effects. These effects will not be described in detail here, but they include;

i. Introducing new knowledge structures which have confused the epistemological base of the culture by arbitrarily imposing alien models of explanation and of knowledge,

ii. Introducing a set of teaching strategies which bear little

relationships to traditional strategies, and which imply a quite different form of knowledge,

iii. Introducing conflict between the socialization processes undertaken by the community, and the instructional processes undertaken in school. This conflict has the effect of weakening the impact of both processes, and of creating cognitive dissonance and confusion in the children,

iv. Utilizing a hidden curriculum which presents an alternative world-view to the child, through assumptions about the temporal and spatial organization of schooling, the structure and nature of authority, the nature of interpersonal relationships within the school, and the role of Aboriginal people in education.

The implications of all of this for Aboriginal education are clear. I would wish to describe Aboriginal communities as being characterized by high levels of dissonance and contradiction, introduced through the impact of white society on these communities. I would further argue that the future of these communities depends on the extent to which they are able to reduce this dissonance, and that the communities are, at the moment, struggling to achieve a coherent society which is functional within Australia, yet still identifiably Aboriginal. Finally,I would add that this struggle is made more difficult by the conflicting and often un-stated demands placed on the communities, by lack of certainty within the communities as to the boundaries of tolerance imposed by the white society, and by their lack of control over some of the central elements in the cultural pattern.

The reproductive systems are essential elements in this process. In a situation which is characterised by rapid change, it is essential that the reproductive processes be closely in contact with these changes. In particular, it is essential that

i. Internal conflict within the reproductive processes be reduced (particularly between education and socialization)

ii. Conflict between the shifting epistemological base, and the knowledge structures implicit in education be minimized,

iii. Conflict between the demands and characteristics of changing cultural outcomes (whether economic, social, or religious) and the reproductive processes be minimized.

This places some very specific demands on the education system;

i. The symbolic and knowledge structures of the school must be aligned, as far as possible, with the same structures in the communities. This may require modifications in teaching strategies, temporal and spatial organisation, authority structures, language usage, and so on.

ii. The educational process must be sensitively aligned with both the changing epistemological base, and with the changing demands of the cultural outcomes of the communities.

iii. The education system must ensure the development of essential skills, as predicated by the instrumental aspects of the cultural outcomes,

iv. The education system must be closely involved in the construction of emerging concepts of Aboriginal identity. As a central aspect of the cultural reproductive processes, education cannot avoid such a role.

These demands cannot be fully met by an education system which draws its basic assumption from western cultures,nor by teachers who do not share the

process of socialisation into the Aboriginal culture. This emphasises the need for real decision making in education to be located within the Aboriginal communities. Such control will

i. Provide schools with accurate, immediate information on the changing cultural environment, to which the schools must respond,

ii. Enable the translation of this response into culturally compatable teaching strategies and teaching styles,

iii. Recognize, and provide directions for the reduction of dissonance between educational and socialization processes.

iv. Provide Aboriginal communities with models for the development of autonomy and control over their own initiatives,

v. Provide pupils with teachers to whom they can relate immediately as familiar adults, (a central aspect of traditional educational methods),

vi. Provide communities with points of access for direct control over the essential reproductive processes within their cultures.

Many of the recent innovatory programmes in Aboriginal education are based very directly, if not always explicitly, on these kinds of considerations. However, the range of innovations, and the kinds of strategies adopted have varied considerably across Aboriginal communities. The range of such programmes which could be considered in this paper is very large, and would include;

i) Murrawina; an Aboriginal controlled and staffed pre-school and community centre in Sydney,

ii)AFEC (Aboriginal Family Education Centres); a modification of the Family Education programmes developed in New Zealand and now operating across rural NSW,

iii)The Aboriginal Task Force; an Aboriginal social worker trainee scheme operating at the South Australian Institute of Technology,

iv)Aboriginal enclave programmes operating in number of CAEs providing special entry and support facilities for Aboriginal traineed teachers,

v) the Out-station schools; the development of small local school in decentralized communities throughout Northern Australia,

vi) NAEC ; the National Aboriginal Education Committee, an Aboriginal advisory body to the Commonwealth Department of Education.

This list could be continued for a long time. However, for the purposes of this paper I wish to describe three programmes in some detail, indicating the ways in which the characteristics described above are being expressed in the school programmes. The three programmes being considered are superficially similar - all are in remote areas of Australia, all are operating in western desert Aboriginal groups, and all are concerned with primary education. However, the three communities (Hermannsburg, Strelley and Yipirina) differ in important ways, and the school programmes also show significant differences.

THREE CASE STUDIES, YIPIRINYA, HERMANNSBURG & STRELLEY

Three case studies are provided as an example of the ways in which the model outlined above may be used to clarify the nature of educational innovations in Aboriginal communities. All three are brief, and are provided as illustrative examples for discussion, rather than as detailed analyses. The material is provided in three sections:

a) General descriptions

b) Critical Aspects of the cultural configuration

c) Educational strategies

In section b) & c) the discussion is related specifically to the model outlined above.

A) GENERAL DESCRIPTION

1) STRELLEY

The Community

Strelley is a community of some 600+ Nyangumarta, Mantjiltjarra and Kukatja speaking Aboriginals in the north-west of Western Australia. This community has a long history of determined independence dating back to the Pilbara strike of 1946. The community currently owns and operates a number of pastoral stations near Port Hedland, and has achieved a unique level of economic and social independence. The community is highly traditionally oriented, and is determined to maintain a modified but distinctive Aboriginal culture within the broader economic and political structures of Australian society.

The Development of the School

The Strelley community vigorously opposed the provision of a state school in the community arguing that such schools seriously threatened the survival of the group, and the maintenance of the traditional culture. However, in 1975, the Strelley community obtained sufficient funds to enable them to provide their own school, based on traditional community structures, but recognising their need for literacy and mathematics.

The School

Liberman provides the following description of Strelley School:

'Beginning in 1975 with three classes, one at each of the three major camps, and four teachers, the Strelley School now has five ungraded classes of twelve to seventeen students each, three preschools, one "bridging" class for older students, two Nyangumarta literacy classes, and one Mantjiltjarra literacy class. There are also workshops such as motor maintenance, typing, and functional literacy that involve more than 150 students, about half of whom are adults. Students in the five ungraded classes spend ninety minutes each in literacy and in mathematics instruction daily.

The school is governed by an all-Aboriginal school board, unique in Australia. The board retains exclusive control over staffing, sets curriculum priorities, selects students for particular programs, and works to insure that teaching is consistent with the Aboriginal traditions of the community. For example, they have divided class enrollments according to the traditional Aboriginal moeity divisions, the mechanism of social organization whereby the members of a community are divided into two groups (of two subsections each) for the purposes of marriage and association. Selecting class membership on the basis of these divisions insures that patterns of association that disrupt the traditional social organization will not develop.

Most schools at remote Aboriginal settlements are held in exclusive quarters under the influence of European administrators, and Aboriginal parents feel alienated from the school, where they are, for the most part, not needed or wanted. At Strelley, all classes are located in the camps and are held outside or under tin shelters; the pupils and teachers, one European and one Aboriginal per class, sit on woollen blankets in circles in traditional Aboriginal fashion. Instruction is observed by the local community, which the school board members believe helps to promote community involvement and control. Aboriginal people spend their entire lives out-of-doors, and Aboriginal and European staff alike insist that holding classes on the ground and in the camps instead of inside school buildings or trailers insures that the school will remain an Aboriginal enterprise.

The curriculum emphasizes traditional Aboriginal activities. Mathematics instruction, for example, is presented in the context of fishing and gathering pearls. Literacy classes are based mostly on

texts produced at the settlement and deal with elements of everyday Aboriginal life. The adults special workshops cover a variety of practical skills such as motor maintenance and handicrafts; the English literacy classes discuss current issues facing the community. No instruction is given that would conflict with the traditions of the sacred Aboriginal Law, which is maintained throughout the activities at Strelley as the best guarantee of a strong Aboriginal culture.'

(Liberman, 1981, p. 141-142)

2) HERMANNSBURG

The Community

Hermannsburg is a Lutheran mission, established on the Finke River, 70 miles west of Alice Springs, in the late nineteenth century. Over the last eight years the Aranda community has substantially moved away from the mission, re-establishing itself as small, traditionally structured, kinship groups, predominantly on traditional land, some close to Hermannsburg some as much as 120 kilometres from Hermannsburg. These out-stations are operating as autonomous communities, dependent on various social security benefits for their basic income, and on Hermannsburg for the provision of basic technological, medical and super-market requirements. The Aranda have successfully obtained land rights to this country, previously cattle country, and some of the out-stations are operating small marginal cattle projects. The background to the development of the out-station movement at Hermannsburg has been described in Fargher and Ziersch (1981).

The Development of the School

With the move to the out-stations, the Hermannsburg School, which had operated as a predominantly European age grade structured school, became redundant. The out-station communities subsequently negotiated with the mission for the provision of schools on the out-stations, with some very specific characteristics.

(i) The schools were to operate within traditional kinship groupings with no cross-groupings and with teachers to be allocated only to related groups.

(ii) The schools were to operate within the out-station camps, with teachers visiting but not normally resident on the camps.

(iii) The schools were to operate for short periods of time; typically 2 hours per day, 4 days per week.

(iv) The schools were to teach oral English, English literacy, basic numeracy (money facts) and 'bible stories'.

(v) They were to teach nothing else.

(vi) All teaching was to be undertaken in English by the non-Aboriginal teaching staff.

The Schools

The Hermannsburg school system now incorporates some 25 schools, located on out-station camps. European teachers, resident at Hermannsburg, are normally assigned to schools, in traditionally related communities, to which they commute on a daily basis (although some teachers stay overnight once a week in the more remote camps). Each teacher will typically have two 2-hour school sessions per day, for four days, with children normally spending two hours per day in schools for four days a week.

The central school now operates as a resource centre, storing materials and providing facilities for the production of teaching materials. The out-stations may provide a small shed, of varying sophistication, for the school, although teaching often occurs outside on a blanket under a tree. Teachers take all their teaching materials with them for thier visits, occasionally leaving some materials behind for the children to use informally between visits. The numbers of pupils varies from perhaps 3 or 4 to around a dozen, depending on the mobility of the groups concerned.

All fifteen of the teaching staff are non-Aboriginal teachers, living at Hermannsburg. The central school also provides a two-teacher unit for the children of non-Aboriginal staff at Hermannsburg, described as the E.F.L. (English as a First Language) school.

As has been mentioned, the curriculum is very tightly structured around English and mathematics; literacy, oral English and number skills. No social studies, science, geography, arts & crafts, drama, etc. are taught. The Aranda communities consider that the provision of this information is their responsibility, and children are instructed in aspects of traditional culture in formal and informal situations away from the school.

Hermannsburg is a registered independent school, substantially supported by the Northern Territory Education Department. The Department is supportive of, and sometimes enthusiastic about the structure and programme at Hermannsburg.

3) YIPIRINYA

The Community

Some fifteen hundred Aboriginal people are currently living in fringe camps around Alice Springs. The history and cultural background of these groups varies substantially. Some groups (e.g. Aranda and Loritja) have been living on the fringes of Alice Springs for a number of generations while others (e.g. the Walbiri) have moved in from settlements within the last 5-10 years. These fringe dwelling communities are clearly distinguishable from the 2,000 urban Aborigines and 14,000 non-Aboriginal people living in Alice Springs, and the 5,000 to 6,000 Aboriginal people living in settlements in southern Northern Territory.

However, the fringe dwelling groups share a number of characteristics, including living in extreme poverty in typical 'humpy-camp' conditions, a lack of sophistication in western culture, a lack of access to the major institutions of western culture, high unemployment and typically sporadic employment in unskilled temporary positions, high levels of dependence on white society, and little involvement or influence in local, territory or federal politics.

As the Yipirinya school curriculum document notes 'fringe camp people live there by conscious choice. They realise that they must co-exist with the dominant non-Aboriginal society, but wish to retain their cultural identity within it. They are strong in the culture, speaking their own language and living in extended family groups according to the kinship system. They have retained

their traditional orientation, sharing an Aboriginal world view based on the law, the land, and ceremonies. There are even numerous sacred sites around Alice Springs itself, some of which belonged to the Yipirinya dreaming.'

In the mid-1970s these communities established their own council, Tangentyera Council, as a co-ordinating body to undertake activities on behalf of the communities. This body has been successful in providing a focus of community identity, and in negotiating over obtaining special purpose leases for the communities, housing, and general improved health facilities, In this the council is supported by, and works closely with, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, a federally funded Aboriginal organisation located in Alice Springs.

The Development of Yipirinya School

Fringe dwelling Aboriginal children have had minimal contact with western educational institutions in Alice Springs for a number of decades. Tangentyera Council attributes this to a variety of factors, including:

(i) lack of adequate dress and footwear;

(ii) lack of money for school activities;

(iii) poor health;

(iv) quite inadequate English (for many of these children English is a second and often foreign language);

(v) prejudice expressed by non-Aboriginal children;

(vi) transport difficulties;

(vii) stigmatisation as slow learners, and so on.

As the council describes it 'The parents perceived both government and non-goverment schools in Alice Springs as alien institutions: monolingual and mono-cultural, in which foreign teachers offered their children foreign content in a foreign manner. Their solution was to set up and alternative: Yipirinya School'.

The following extract describes the characteristics of Yipirinya School:

> 'Yipirinya School is a community school, involving and catering for different sections of each fringe camp community in which it is operating. Old people are involved in child care and in the education of the young. All Aboriginal teachers receive appropriate training, and tuition of children takes place within the community itself. The school offers a viable alternative to centralised, monolingual, monocultural, non-Aboriginal schools controlled by the government. Features of the Yipirinya alternative include Aboriginal control, a decentralised structure, the Aboriginalisation of teaching staff, and a bilingual programme which is an integral part of a genuinely bi-cultural curriculum.'

While there are 270 school age children living in the 16 fringe camp communities around Alice Springs, 90 of these children are enrolled at Yipirinya School. This enrolment constitutes 80% of the Aboriginal children living in the communities which currently have a school operating. It is expected that this enrolment will increase to 150 by 1984. The ages range from 4 to 15 years. Sixty percent of those enrolled are described as regular and permanent attenders, 20% as regular but impermanent attenders and 20% as irregular and impermanent attenders.

The School

All teaching in the Yipirinya Schools is undertaken by untrained Aboriginal teachers. These teachers, all women, are from the fringe dwelling communities, and are teaching within their own communities. The Aboriginal teaching staff are supported by three European staff, a Co-ordinator, who is heavily involved in administration, an Adult Educator, concerned with training and assisting the Aboriginal teachers, and a part-time Child Care Worker. An Aboriginal linguist from Victoria is also involved in the programme, developing literacy materials for a bilingual programme. Other Aboriginal members of the communities are involved in a variety of support positions.

The Aboriginal teachers spend five hours on Mondays of each week involved in professsional development courses with the non-Aboriginal staff. This includes curriculum development work, oral English, and literacy instruction. During this time the children in the camps are involved in working with other Aboriginal elders, learning traditional materials, usually in bush settings.

During the remaining four days the Aboriginal teachers spend 2-2½ hours per day formally teaching in the fringe camps.

The schools are structured around traditional kinship groupings with, where necessary, more than one school operating in a community. Each school includes wide age range and often includes young children and adults within the teaching situation. While most communities have sheds available for use as school buildings, the school often moves outside the boundaries of school buildings.

The curriculum proposals for Yipirinya school have two major components, (a) literacy and numeracy. A significant intention of these schools is the development of literacy in both traditional languages and English and the development of basic numeracy in schools. These developments are seen as the major tasks of the Aboriginal teachers with the support and assistance of the non-Aboriginal staff.

(b) cultural development. The second intent is to actively involve the schools in the development and maintenance of an identifiably Aboriginal culture within the fringe dwelling situations. In this the development of the school is seen as an essential part of the development of the community requiring a great deal of discussion and organisation across the various fringe dwelling communities. This also involves many Aboriginal elders operating in the camps, undertaking direct instruction of Aboriginal children in traditional culture aspects. This component of the curriculum is seen as being equivalent to the State school system subjects such as history, geography, social studies, etc.

These curriculum objectives are summarised by the Yipirinya School Council as follows:

> 'reinforcement of the Aboriginal identity of Yipirinya children is one prime concern of the Yipirinya School Council in its efforts to provide these children with an appropriate education. The Council is seeking to ensure primary identity confirmation by mounting a strong cultural programme in which the teaching of vernacular literacy skills is an important part.
>
> The affective and cognitive skills acquired in this process equip children to acquire second language literacy, mathematics concepts, and an ability to operate without disadvantage in the dominant non-Aboriginal culture.
>
> The Yipirinya School Council also believes that community development is an essential part of the education of children and has accordingly documented it as an integral part of its curriculum. The education of children can only take place in context, the context of a healthy, strong, self-determining community. The Yipirinya School Council therefore sees local control as a pre-requisite for both positive community development, and the appropriate education of Yipirinya children.'

Yipirinya is not a registered school, and obtains no direct government funding, despite extended negotiations between Northen Territory Education Department and Yipirinya. The school has applied for registration and is currently being assessed by the Education Department for this purpose. The school is maintained financially from a variety of sources, including overseas Church based relief agencies such as the World Council of Churches. The School obtains considerable indirect support from the Northern Territory Education Department through the use of a variety of curriculum guidelines and materials.

B) THE CULTURAL CONFIGURATION

All three communities described above have been concerned with the process of attempting to reduce contradiction within the general cultural configuration. All three perceive education, and the development of independent, community run schools, as central to this process. However, before describing the ways in which the schools have been structured there are some general characteristics of the cultural patterns which need clarification.

1) The Economic Framework

STRELLEY

The community at Strelley has most actively undertaken the construction of an independent economic base. An essential component in the history of Strelley has been the development of, and control over, the economic activities of the group, and in this Strelley has been successful. The group now has a secure and independent economic base, particularly through the operation of the pastoral properties. The Strelley community has been able to develop a coherent, viable and identifiably Aboriginal culture around this economic structure.

HERMANNSBURG

The economic structure at Hermannsburg placed virtually no demands on the communities. The economy is based on social security benefits, which are assumed as part of a benevolent environment; a super waterhole theory. These payments are sufficient to provide those community needs not able to be met from the local resources; petrol, batteries, some foodstuffs, rifles and bullets, and so on. The remainder of the communities' needs; food, shelter, land, etc., are provided

locally, based on land rights. So long as Aboriginal land and social security benefits remain inviolate, and the members of the communities elect to remain within the group, then this is not an unreasonable decision. This economic structure placed minimal demands on western education, and permits the maintenance of a minimally modified traditional cultural structure.

YIPIRINYA

The economic framework of the Alice Springs fringe dwelling communities is, at least superficially, similar to Hermannsburg, in that the communities are living on special purpose leases and are dependent on social security benefits. However they are living within Alice Springs, and are subject to economic and social pressures not experienced in the Hermannsburg out-stations. The fringe dwelling groups are totally dependent on operating within a cash economy, and do not have the land-based resources enjoyed by Hermannsburg or Strelley. The long term economic structures and activities of these fringe dwelling communities have not been clarified, and perhaps cannoc be at this stage. However the lack of clear economic direction places major barriers in the way of developing the whole cultural configuration and in the development of appropriate educational strategies.

2) Cultural Outcomes

All three communities are concerned with developing a set of cultural outcomes which are internally consistent. This development has been predicated by the economic structures and by the nature and strength of the epistemological base (below). The patterns differ for the three communities.

STRELLEY

The economic structures at Strelley, which are more developed and autonomous than these at the other two communities, have been more influential in modifying both the cultural outcomes and the epistemological base. The commitment to a group identity which extends beyond traditional kinship structures has led to the emergence of an economy within the community which allocates responsibilities and material benefits across the whole community, including the children, on a deliberate and equitable basis which, while modifying traditional structures, emphasises the group interdependence. Strelley operates within a centralized authority structure which, while not existing within the traditional Aboriginal

structures, has been an essential component in the development of the Strelley community as a viable autonomous group. Authority structures, religious and aesthetic activities, economic activities, housing, health practices, and so on, have all been modified, to a greater or lesser degreee, to be compatable with, and to support this economic structure.

HERMANNSBURG

The dominant influence in the patterns of cultural outcomes at Hermannsburg has been the traditional, minimally modified, epistemolgy. The normative and aesthetic activities at Hermannsburg have been maintained within traditional frameworks with minimal interference from the economic activities. Social security benefits are ultimately distributed within the local group, while traditional authority structures determine the 'ownership' of community based resources such as land, cattle, Toyotas, etc. The high levels of autonomy of the out-stations is, I believe, a temporary reaction against the long period spent on Hermannsburg mission. During this period Aboriginal kinship groups which would have had minimal contact with one another in traditional structures were forced into close and uncomfortable proximity. The development of the out-station movement at Hermannsburg can be seen at least in part as a reaction to this enforced co-existence, and is being maintained as a reaction to that situation.

YIPIRINYA

Yipirinya is characterized by neither a clear economic structure, nor a strong traditional epistemological base. The normative and aesthetic frameworks of the fringe dwelling camps are still in the process of development. The camps are made up of a number of different language and kinship groups, sometimes living on the same camps, but with clear demarcations between the groups. As with Hermannsburg, the economic structures have had minimal influence on the normative and aesthetic structures, with social security benefits being the basis upon which the communities are developing. However, serious tensions exist between the traditional normative and aesthetic frameworks, and the demands placed on these communities by their far greater involvement in, and dependence on, the western economy and culture of Alice Springs. As a result, the Yipirinya communities are faced with the task of contemporaneously constructing a viable and consistent epistemolgy and a consistent set of cultural outcomes. Both processes have barely begun.

3) The Epistemological Base

The comments on the cultural outcomes indicated the general patterns of development at the epistemological frameworks of these communities. However, some further comments are appropriate:

STRELLEY

The community at Strelley has gone furthest towards developing a modified, functional and coherent cultural structure, with an epistemological base which reflects this structure. This modified base incorporates changed normative structures, literacy, new economic structures and behaviours, new political concepts, and so on. Of the three communities being considered in this paper, Strelley is furthest along the road to developing a sustainable, satisfying and identifiably Aboriginal culture.

HERMANNSBURG

In the absence of any major constraints from either the economic structures or from mainstream Australian society, the Hermannsburg communities are substantially retaining and strengthening a traditional framework. This is reflected in the maintenance of traditional religious and normative frames of reference, on-going economic behaviours (hunting, food gathering, etc.) which approximate traditional behaviours, and social relationships which are very traditionally organized. Of the three groups, Hermannsburg most closely resembles a traditional Aboriginal society.

YIPIRINYA

The fringe dwelling groups have a most difficult task in developing a viable world view for the group. The demands of their situation; the cash economy, the pervasive presence of white culture, the alienation from land, the constant demands of white society for English language skills, the continuous subjection to western legal demands, and so on, all demand a radically modified cultural system with a radically modified epistemological base. The task of constructing a viable, identifiably Aboriginal culture in such a situation is enormously complex, unpredictable and time consuming. While traditional frameworks are expected to provide the basic reference point for the development of these communities, the very powerful constraints and demands, imposed by their close proximity to, and dependence on, Alice Springs will impose a variety of modifications which are, as yet, unclear.

C) EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

All three communities have recognised the importance of education in reducing, or contributing to, contradictions and conflict within the groups. Three critical areas will be considered:

1) Education and socialization
2) Education and epistemology
3) Education and cultural outcomes.

In all three of these areas the communities have been concerned with radically re-structuring education in order to reduce contradictions betweeen education and other components of the cultural order. However, the strategies adopted differ significantly, in ways consistent with the cultural characteristics described above.

1) Education and Socialization

As was indicated in the earlier section of this paper, western education systems have generated considerable contradiction within the reproductive processes. All three communities have developed some common strategies in reducing some of these contradictions:

1) The emphasis on local control over the school structure and curriculum content is specifically directed towards this problem.
2) All three schools have moved away from the spartial and temporal structures of western schools, abandoning classrooms and locating schools within ongoing community activities.
3) All three schools are organized around traditional kinship structures, abandoning western age-grade structures.

However, within these commonalities, a number of differing strategies have been developed.

HERMANNSBURG

The time spent in schools and the content of the programme has been reduced at Hermannsburg to an absolute minimum, and the boundaries between 'school' and 'community' have been very strongly emphasised. The Aboriginal pupils spend eight hours per week in a clearly defined situation, with boundaries maintained by language (English only) personnel (only a European teacher) dress and appearance (the children are dressed and spruced up for school) and behaviour (the expectations on the behaviour of the children are very clear). The remaining

160 hours per week are spent immersed in Aranda culture, including both informal socializations and formal instruction. This imbalance in time and social commitment, coupled with the clear boundary definitions, leaves little opportunity for serious conflict to arise.

However it is worth noting that this reduction in formal schooling is related to the economic activities of the community. The community continues to be totally dependent on outside economic support, through social security benefits and through the provision of central resources at Hermannsburg. As long as these activites are so irrelevant to the daily lives of the communities, the minimilisation, if not trivialisation of western education can be maintained. I suspect this is a temporary phenomenon at Hermannsburg, and increasingly the out-station communities will move towards greater economic independence and security, and a greater central group identity, as part of the necessary negotiations with a broader Australian culture. If this occurs, greater demands will be placed on education, and a rather more complex set of strategies will need to be developed.

STRELLEY

The strategies at Strelley are substantially more complex. Rather than isolating the western educational processes and minimising their effects, Strelley has adopted a more holistic (and ultimately I suspect more effective) approach, modifying a number of aspects of the cultural pattern. The education system has been tied closely to the ongoing economic structures of the community with the schooling being closely related to genuine economic activities of the Aboriginal pupils. At the same time the school is involved with adults as well as children, with Aboriginal adults accepting both pupil and teacher roles. Aboriginal teachers are required to adopt behaviours appropriate to the Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal community, by so directly controlling content, style and teacher behavior have almost completely aligned the school to the socialisation processes and with the modified epistemology and cultural demands of the community.

YIPIRINYA

Again, Yipirinya is in the most difficult situation in attempting to reduce contradictions within the reproductive processes. While at Hermannsburg and Strelley the school is functioning within isolated traditional communities,

remote from western culture, the Yipirinya communities are existing in Alice Springs where children are constantly being subject to a wide range of western influences. Further, the Yipirinya communities, alienated from their land and from many traditional cultural supports, are actively defending a cultural pattern which is under constant threat from external socialising influences. Yipirinya has paralleled Hermannsburg in opting for shorter periods of formal schooling but is the only community which has insisted upon using an all-Aboriginal teaching staff. The Yipirinya Council argues that the use of such staff will, of itself, reduce conflict between the socialisation and educational processes. How well this works depends of course on what the Aboriginal staff do, and this is not yet clear. However to the extent that the Yipirinya school is seen as being involved in the development of the whole community rather than in the educational processes of children, and to the extent that the development of the school is seen as a central component in the reconstruction of the group, the strategies adopted are necessarily broad, general and tentative.

It is perhaps also worth noting that Yipirinya is the only school which formally includes traditional cultural material into the school programme. Again this is a reflection of the extent to which the development of the school is so closely tied to general community development.

2) Education and Epistemology

All three communities share some common problems in developing a viable epistomological base for their communities. These have been described above. However, a couple of additional problems relate very closely to education, and deserve noting here:

1) Western knowledge structures

All communities have to explore the difficulties generated by the imposition of western naturalistic modes of explanation on to traditional normative modes. Whether the problems generated will be solved by the seperation of two knowledge systems (religious and secular), by an amalgamation of the two, or by the rejection of one or the other is by no means clear.

2) Literacy

All three communities place literacy as a central demand on the schools. However, the implications of this demand have not been fully explored by these

communities. While the effects of literacy will depend heavily on the nature and functions of literacy in the communities, the possible effects on knowledge and authority structures are profound.

HERMANNSBURG

As was indicated above, the epistemological framework at Hermannsburg is being maintained with minimal interference from western culture. This is equally true of the school. The teaching of English, literacy and mathematics is being attached, tenuously, to traditional knowledge structures, as specific skills. With literacy and numeracy being minimally relevant skills which are very rarely used in these communities, it is unlikely that either:

1) high levels of literacy and numeracy will be achieved or maintained, or
2) these skills will have any real effects on the epistemological base.

STRELLEY

The epistemological structures at Strelley have over the last 40 years, been steadily modified to incorporate the changes which have taken place in the community. The education system, with its emphasis on practical and immediately applicable skills, and with the extensive and direct control of the Aboriginal community, has been aligned very closely with this epistemological base. Such a close relationship further suggests that if the epistemological base continues to change and develop as it is likely to, such changes will be readily incorporated into the educational system.

YIPIRINYA

The Yipirinya communities are still centrally concerned with constructing an epistemological framework which is viable within the Alice Springs context. This will require the development of economic structures, normative frameworks, and religious and aesthetic activities, and an epistemological base which incorporates these. To the extent that community involvement in developing the school is a starting point in constructing these traits, the nature of the school, and its relationship to other aspects of the communities, has not yet been clarified.

3) Education and Cultural Outcomes

The relationships between education and the various cultural outcomes are relatively straightforward on the three communities;

1) STRELLEY

The relationships here are very close. The school is almost isomorphic with both the economic needs of the community and to the on-going economic and social activities. Children in the schools are involved in real economic activities, as an integral part of their education and are learning specific skills relating to those activites, while the structure and organisation of the school relates closely to the community structure and organisation. Aesthetic and religious activities occur largely outside the school, with the school supporting these activities.

2) HERMANNSBURG

The schools at Hermannsburg have been structured around the traditional community structures operating on the out-stations. However, beyond this, the schools have little involvement in the economic, normative or aesthetic activities of the communities, and provides very little threat to these activities.

3) YIPIRINYA

The Yipirinya schools are structured around the normative frameworks of the fringe-dwelling communities, and are designed to support these frameworks. The school is being closely tied to emerging normative and aesthetic structures, and ultimately to economic activities, and is at the moment, an integral part of the development of these structures.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

These case studies provide a useful test of the utility of the model described in the first section of this paper.

The model identifies both commonalities and substantive differences between the three school systems considered; differences which can be interpreted within the model as indicating a consistent set of underlying principles which generate different, but coherent, strategies in the three situations.

The analysis indicates that in all three situations the schools have moved significantly towards developing school systems which are appropriate to the context within which the communities are operating.

As has been indicated above, Strelley, with its strong economic base and its long history of independent development, has the most fully developed community structure and the most fully developed education system. Hermannsburg is currently in a stable situation, in which schools are having minimal impact. I suspect that this is a temporary state, and that increasingly the Hermannsburg communities will move towards a more hierarchical authority structure, and a greater demand for autonomy. If this occurs, the schooling system will change and indeed one out-station has already requested a "Big School" (a full western programme), for its children. Negotiations on the nature of this school are currently under way.

Yipirinya has emerged most recently and has the furthest to go. While Hermannsburg and Strelley are able to structure their schools around a functional and relatively isolated cultural system, Yipirinya has no such advantages. The communities are attempting to construct a social order in a confused and contradictory situation.

When, and only when, this social order begins to become clarified will it be possible to refine the nature of the school system. At the moment the school is serving a number of more general community development purposes which take precedence over what is done to the children - this is appropriate and necessary if the fringe dwelling communities are going to develop at all.

This discussion also suggests some more general comments about the future of Aboriginal education in Australia:

1) The communities in developing appropriate educational strategies, have vindicated their demands for independent control over their school systems. The strategies would not, and could not, have been developed by a centralized state school system.

2) The diversity of strategies adopted within superficially similar communities, emphasizes the futility of attempts to construct Aboriginal education programmes on a state or nation wide basis. It would not be possible, at the moment, to provide a single school structure which would meet the needs of the three communities described above. When the full range of diversity across Aboriginal communities in Australia is recognised this point becomes even stronger.

3) Aboriginal communities throughout Australia are currently developing modified, but recognisably Aboriginal cultures. While there are some basic shared characteristics, the differences between these communities are substantial, and will continue to be so for the forseeable future.

4) The implications of these developments for multi-culturalism and for multi-cultural education in Australia are, I believe, substantial, and have not been given the prominence they deserve.

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